

Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award
Winner

**NMFS-NOAA: Preventing Migratory Seabird Mortality in U.S. West Coast Groundfish
Longline Fisheries**

Partners: California Sea Grant Extension; David and Lucille Packard Foundation; Englund Marine and Industrial Supply, Oregon, Washington, California; Fishing Vessels Owner's Association, Seattle, WA; International Pacific Halibut Commission; LFS Marine and Outdoor, Seattle, WA; Makah Tribe, Washington; Marine Service and Supply Inc.; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Oregon State University; Pacific Fishery Management Council; Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon Sea Grant; Quileute Tribe, Washington; Quinault Tribe, Washington; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Tommy's Marine Supply, Fort Bragg, California; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Washington Sea Grant

Seabirds are an integral part of the marine environment, which is studied and managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA Fisheries (National Marine Fisheries Service), in particular, is responsible through various statutory authorities and agency actions to monitor, understand, and mitigate the effects of seabird incidental catch in



Photo Credit: Dr. Robert Suryan, Oregon State University

fisheries, as well as to manage the coastal and marine habitats that seabirds depend on. Recent efforts off of the U.S. West Coast are benefiting seabirds, especially three North Pacific albatross species the Laysan, Black-footed, and Short-tailed Albatross. Albatrosses, which face a variety of threats across their wide ranges, are among the most threatened bird species.

NOAA Fisheries, in collaboration with many partners, is succeeding in keeping seabirds off the hooks of vessels using bottom longline gear in fisheries off of the U.S. West Coast (i.e. Washington, Oregon, California). Nearly 300 vessels operate within this fishery, targeting species such as sablefish and halibut. The stage for the action was set by the successful seabird conservation efforts in the Alaska fisheries that began in the 1990s and effectively used streamer lines during gear setting to deter seabirds from accessing baited hooks. Spurred in part by efforts by Washington Sea Grant on the issue of seabird interactions in longline gear, NOAA Fisheries undertook outreach to develop partnerships and collaborate with the fishing industry and other entities. The collaboration made possible synergies among applied research, science-based assessments, and policy development for preventing seabird mortality in West Coast groundfish

fisheries. Subsequently, the fishing industry voluntarily implemented measures to reduce seabird interactions, while NOAA Fisheries refined regulations and policies based on data and science. The resulting partnerships (e.g. state and federal agencies, fishermen associations, Native tribes, fishing gear suppliers, fishery management council) brought about institutional changes to protect seabirds from fishery impacts and make the topic of seabird conservation a fixture in the fishery management process along the U.S. West Coast. As a result, fewer seabirds are dying and that number is expected to continue to decline as the efforts of the partnerships continue to bear fruit.